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SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE (When Data Entered)

REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO.	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) The Rear Battle: A Maneuver Doctrine Dilemma		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED STUDENT ESSAY
7. AUTHOR(s) LTC Raymond E. Gentilini		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS U.S. Army War College Carlisle Barracks, PA 17013-5050		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS SAME		12. REPORT DATE 14 May 1986
13. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 20
		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) UNCLASSIFIED
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A: Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited.		
DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number)		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) This essay is a critical look at Rear Battle doctrine. The criticism is centrally focused on the influence maneuver warfare has had on AirLand Battle and specifically on the Rear Battle. It exposes the flawed attempt to fuse the close-in and deep battle with the rear battle. It documents a long litany of doctrinal deficiencies and advocates rethinking the doctrinal solutions offered in FM 90-14, <u>Rear Battle</u> . Selected issues reviewed include the command and control problems base and base cluster problems, tactical combat (continued)		

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force including fire support integration and the dilemma of fighting the rear battle versus CSS mission support requirements. The paper advocates more realistic training for CSS units, rethinking the mechanics of how MP's will respond to various threat level conditions and rewriting rear battle doctrine to reflect solutions to the problems delineated which are consistent with the capabilities of the units inhabiting the rear area. The essay ends with a plea for military leaders to recognize the realities of the rear battle situation and realize the danger in recklessly following maneuver doctrine.

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THE REAR BATTLE: A MANEUVER DOCTRINE DILEMMA

BY

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**THE REAR BATTLE: A MANEUVER DOCTRINE DILEMMA
AN INDIVIDUAL ESSAY**

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ABSTRACT

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TITLE: The Rear Battle: A Maneuver Doctrine Dilemma

FORMAT: Individual Essay

DATE: 14 May 1986 Pages: Classification: Unclassified

This essay is a critical look at Rear Battle doctrine. The criticism is centrally focused on the influence maneuver warfare has had on AirLand Battle and specifically on the Rear Battle. It exposes the flawed attempt to fuse the close-in and deep battle with the rear battle. It documents a long litany of doctrinal solutions offered in FM 90-14, Rear Battle. Selected issues reviewed include the command and control problems, base and base cluster problems, tactical combat force including fire support integration and the dilemma of fighting the rear battle versus CSS mission support requirements. The paper advocates more realistic training for CSS units, rethinking the mechanics of how MP's will respond to various threat level conditions and rewriting rear battle doctrine to reflect solutions to the problems delineated which are consistent with the capabilities of the units inhabiting the rear area. The essay ends with a plea for military leaders to recognize the realities of the rear battle situation and realize the danger in recklessly following maneuver doctrine.

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Few logistical commanders comprehend the magnitude of their mission responsibilities in terms of leading and fighting the rear area battle. Fewer still appreciate the level of violence, degree of hostility, and overall lethality that will confront them and their troops on the modern rear area battlefield. To ameliorate this situation, Department of the Army (DA) revised and published new doctrinal guidance concerning the conduct of the rear battle in FM 90-14 dated 10 June 1985. This publication superseded FM 31-85, "Rear Area Protection Operations," dated 17 July 1970, and clearly attempts to fuse the rear battle with the close and deep battles in the overall Airland Battle concept of operations.

The principles and concepts of the Airland Battle are clarified in FM 100-5 "Operations," dated June 1986. FM 100-5 is the Army's keystone warfighting manual. FM 90-14 is a subordinate doctrinal manual and as such should add substance to the Airland Battle tenets.¹ A comprehensive analysis of FM 90-14, however, reveals several significant doctrinal deficiencies which complicate the task of logistical commanders and those commanders charged with the conduct of the rear battle. Additionally, FM 90-14's oversights subvert Headquarters, Training and Doctrine Command's (TRADOC) ongoing effort to standardize doctrinally the hierarchy of manuals. Indeed, more importantly, these deficiencies dilute the viability of Airland Battle concepts

and ignore the maneuver warfare focus that has influenced Airland Battle doctrine since its origin in the 1982 edition of FM 100-5. This paper will attempt to expose these doctrinal deficiencies and propose some realistic courses of action to overcome them.

The addition of the rear battle concept to Airland Battle comes through an independent effort that is not consistent with or supportive of the capstone manual. This effort was influenced by maneuver theory but used a more traditional foundation to formulate the supporting doctrine. Instead of beginning with the non-linear maneuver aspects of warfare, rear battle doctrine begins with an assessment of the threat and codifies levels of threat to the warfighters of the rear battle. Although this is inconsistent with the way FM 100-5 handles the close-in and deep battle, FM 90-14, "Rear Battle," is supposed to augment FM 100-5. In fact, in the 1986 edition of FM 100-5, entire sections have been deleted because the publication of FM 90-14 obviates their inclusion in the capstone manual.

This dichotomy leads to a number of doctrinal deficiencies which create difficulties when translated into practice. Of particular importance and certainly having the greatest long range impact is the problem of command and control of the rear battle. Of the seven doctrinal manuals that address some phase of the rear battle none really agrees

upon who's in charge.² This is hardly surprising, because most of these manuals cannot even agree that there is a rear battle. Their concern focuses on the more familiar and traditional issue of rear area protection. Significantly the 1986 edition of FM 100-5 relies principally on the doctrine in FM 90-14 to cover this area. There is a recognition that the activities of rear area protection should be viewed in terms of the rear battle. There is however, no definitive statement concerning command and control of the rear battle.

In maneuver parlance, leadership and monitoring are the rather general terms used to characterize command and control.³ Any analysis of these terms requires the identification of the key individual charged to execute these functions. There appears to be a vague acknowledgement that the corps commanders as well as division and brigade commanders have rear battle responsibilities for rear battle activities at their respective echelons of command. This ambiguous responsibility is further muddied by delegation of authority.

In most cases these commanders delegate command authority to the Rear Battle Officer in the supporting Rear Area Operations Center (RAOC). The command relationships are further complicated by the tactical and technical chains of command that already exist in the rear area.⁴ Because of this situation there is ample opportunity for the CSS units

in the rear area to receive conflicting or non-reconcilable directions emanating from the two different chains of command both of which have authority over CSS units. As indicated earlier, maneuver philosophy command and control relies on leadership and monitoring. Who provides the leadership? Who does the monitoring? It is truly tragic that the single purpose doctrine for the rear battle is so vague that it complicates rather than simplifies the conduct of the war. Unfortunately any analysis done on the doctrinally described organization would reflect these criticisms of the rear area command and control structure. It is appalling to have this most critical issue so ill-defined that solutions are left to the personality on the spot. Some commanders may respond to the challenge, others may not. Because the rear area commanders are left without the required doctrine, in the press of battle, more soldiers will be lost and less support forward will be accomplished. Even the finest maneuver warfare battle captain with inherent intellectual powers would encounter considerable difficulty in attempting to command and control the rear battle. There are too many variables with which he is unfamiliar and which have not been addressed by the new doctrine. The primary purpose of waging the rear battle is to retain overall freedom of action for fighting the close and deep battles.⁵ Yet this purpose is frustrated because the command and control issue has not been realistically resolved in the doctrine.

This doctrinal purpose belies the fact that the Airland Battle is all one battle. It supports the premise that the fusion between the close-in, deep and rear battles is flawed. Detailed reading and analysis of the doctrine reveals that the close-in and deep battle share a singular approach, but the rear battle seemingly has been attached as an afterthought. It is quite clear that the close-in and deep battle were always envisioned as being inextricably related. It segments the Airland Battle by location and ignores the concept of depth. This doctrine does not concern itself with how and why battles are fought but only with where. It dismisses the argument that at the tactical level of warfare most battles are fought for survival reasons. These survival battles will also be fought in the rear area by CS and CSS units. Although the relative frequency may be lower the farther back the location from the close-in battle, the intensity, violence and overall potential significance may equal if not surpass many of the close-in battles. The applicable doctrine must recognize and provide for this reality. To invite these battles in the rear area, as maneuver doctrine is apt to do, could be suicidal.

Not only is the doctrine inadequate but the structure established in the doctrine to cope with the problem is faulty and fragmented. The RAOC lacks the active duty assets necessary to assert control properly. All Rear Area Operations Centers (RAOC) are in the Reserve and National

Guard structure. Their arrival dates have recently been moved up on the time-phased force and deployment list (TPFDL). Still the gap between the outbreak of warfare and their deployment, especially in the no warning and short warning scenarios, dictates that the RAOC's will be in a "catch up mode" from the instant they become operational. With the fluid battlefield situation expected, the RAOC could not possibly be expected to perform effectively in one of its most critical functions, real estate management.⁶ The alternatives for this shortfall are simply not addressed. In maneuver warfare doctrine most situations are not comprehensibly addressed in order to allow total freedom of operation to the battle captain on the ground. The problem here is that the thin line between purposely vague and inadequate has been far overstepped. In fact there is no command and control of the rear battle in the most important phase of transition to war. This situation poses a threat to friendly troops in the rear area. Mistakes in coordination and unavoidable failures in timely decisionmaking processes will unnecessarily cost lives. It is most likely because of their location on the battlefield that those losses will be sustained in Combat Service Support (CSS) Units. It is these same CSS units that during the transition to war can least afford losses. Their low initial capabilities combined with the tremendous surge requirements of the transition phase

make them vulnerable to early defeat when coupled with these unnecessary losses.

Another item that evidences significant doctrinal shortcomings in the rear battle is the reliance on the base cluster concept of defense in the rear area. A close look at maneuver warfare doctrine, specifically that dedicated to defensive tactics, reveals the background for the base cluster defense theory. In reality what appears to be the desired aim of this concept is the reincarnation of the checkerboard defense within the rear area. Maneuver warfare defensive theory is more closely aligned with what traditionally military officers called the mobile defense. Within the rear battle area the typical CSS units could not employ a mobile defense concept because they are generally less than forty percent mobile and none of their mobility assets are sufficiently armed to defend themselves against anything more than light infantry. This defensive mission then is summarily assigned to the MP's who are currently as ill equipped to perform this mobile task as the CSS units are to carry out their own static defense. Future force modernization plans for CSS units call for significant improvement in weaponry and firepower as well as an armed mobility capability for the MP's. It is ludicrous to believe though, that the MP's will be able to rescue beleagured CSS units. They are spread incredibly thin by their mission requirements. How will they reassemble to save the day?

This is purely a stop-gap, poorly conceived, reaction unworthy of its current doctrinal position. Most doctrinal assessments of the rear battle envision an extremely fluid battle. Recognition is given to the nonlinear aspects of the battlefield even to the point of inviting penetrations. This assumes an ability to stop and kill these penetrations at will. Failing this, the ability to defend, protect and secure in the rear area becomes extremely important. The sad state of defensive combat capabilities in CSS units today should dissuade all but the most maniacal maneuver theorists from espousing maneuver doctrine for the Airland Battle rear area operations.

Since every unit in the rear area is responsible for its own defense, the base defense concept is probably viable once the planned CSS improvements and MP armed mobility capability is achieved. As defined in FM 90-14 a base has its own contiguous perimeter. It is, then, a fixed defense. The defensive efforts of a base are coordinated by the unit commander or senior unit commander if it is a multiunit base. Each base requires a Base Defense Operations Center (BDOC) to be established. There is no doubt that this operation would be secondary to the unit's normal operations center. Where the current doctrine breaks down is that it further requires these bases to be organized into base clusters. The theory seems feasible and is motivated by the anticipated threat. The logic appears to be that the anticipated enemy threat

will be greater than a single base could handle by itself. By grouping the bases into base clusters, the argument runs, there is strength in numbers which reduces the need for a tactical combat force to fight the rear battle. But grouping bases into base clusters requires a strong command and control unit. This mission is assigned to the RAOC and specifically to the Rear Battle Officer.

As discussed above, the RAOC and staff, including the Rear Battle Officer, are not present during the transition to war phase when these CSS units would be moving to their general defensive positions (GDP). Once established, most CSS units would oppose the disruption associated with moving unless enemy action or mission requirements made it absolutely necessary. As indicated, most CSS units would be severely strained to meet mission requirements and any movement would consequently degrade support forward. CSS units select tactical locations in order to optimize operational mission requirements. Mutual defensive support by and for other units was never an important consideration. The tradeoff between these above two criteria dilute the readily apparent advantages of the one dimensional decision based on operational mission requirements. Although the base cluster concept has been in existence for at least five years, the CSS units in Seventh Corps in Europe have not realistically practiced its implementation. This is all the more remarkable when one realizes that the Seventh Corps in

Europe is leading the Army in implementing and developing rear battle doctrine.

Additionally, there are a number of structural deficiencies with the base cluster concept. Not the least of these is the inadequate communications assets necessary for a CSS unit to engage in a base cluster defensive plan. Most CSS units lack sufficient radios to maintain contact with their parent unit let alone their "customers" and subordinate units. To add the requirements of a communications net with other units in the base cluster and also be in a net with the RAOC, supporting MP's and/or tactical combat force is physically impossible even if more radios were available. The existing frequencies would be overwhelmed by the signals traffic and security probably would be compromised. The probability that more than half of the CSS unit itself will be away from the base in a support role is extremely high. This situation is further complicated by the necessity to rotate shifts to support "around-the-clock" operations and the additional requirements imposed by the requirement to defend from a manned perimeter. This scheme could only succeed with long hours of dedicated training and manpower reinforcements to conduct the new mission. Even such simple and mundane items as CEOI's would require comprehensive training because nearly everyone in the unit would be needed to man the radios properly if they became available. Agreed upon existing mutual defense procedures would be thwarted as

new units with their own defensive plans moved into the base cluster. The requisite standardization to minimize these problems would have to be drilled in training conducted by RAOC's that are at present, not even on active duty. Indeed, the present base cluster concept with its insurmountable organization and coordination difficulties will require considerable rethinking. These doctrinal shortcomings are exacerbated by maneuver theory influence. At root, however, they are the product of defective doctrinal analysis and would limit any combat application be it attritional or maneuver oriented.

As the Soviet threat has grown, the U.S. Army has recognized that in any future conflict with the Soviets the rear area will be an immediate objective. Dedicated Soviet forces with specific missions will be introduced deep in the rear to carry out previously determined missions. These Soviet operations deep in the enemy's rear areas are not in themselves significant enough to bring about Soviet victory but rather are designed to reduce the enemy's capacity to resist, thus making it easier for the main attack forces to achieve a quick and total victory.⁷

This reality led to the changing of several doctrinal principles concerning the rear battle. Perhaps the most significant change has been the realization that the units in the rear area were incapable of fighting what could rapidly become a major enemy force. This realization has prompted

the designation of a tactical combat force to support combat operations in the rear area. Additionally, major consideration is now being given to committing artillery to the rear battle. Traditionalists vehemently oppose this course of action with the old saw that artillery is never kept in reserve. In fact it is not in reserve but is committed in direct support of the RAOC, the military police, or a unit directly involved in the rear battle.⁸ With the new Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) it is probably feasible to support both the close-in and rear battle with the same launcher. The key is to reserve ammunition for the rear battle. These additions of major combat arms units to weight the rear battle are relatively new developments. Doctrinally, units held in reserve in the rear area were technically always available to counter a major threat in the rear area. The difference in the new doctrine of FM 90-14 is that a dedicated combat arms force is assigned to fight the rear battle. This recognition that CSS units and other rear area elements can no longer handle anticipated threats introduced a number of difficulties into the rear battle.

First among these problems is the integration of the tactical combat force (TCF) into the defensive plans of the base clusters in the rear area. Given the problems of coordinating mutual defensive support discussed previously, the introduction of an external unit complicates that coordination. It also poses different coordination problems

for the base cluster commander. How does the external TCF come to the rescue of an engaged CSS unit without receiving friendly fires? The control measures necessary to avoid such a catastrophe are foreign to the CSS unit which has little or no training time expended on this problem. Additionally the CSS base cluster commander's main concern must be that his units properly carry out their support missions. His priority is to support forward units engaging the enemy. Once a TCF relieves the enemy pressure on a base cluster that is under attack, the base cluster commander will not want to relinquish the battle tasks to the TCF commander and go about his support business. He should not have to. The TCF should be assigned to react as a mobile reserve to respond to the rear battle commander on the scene. If that is a base cluster commander, he will probably try to keep the TCF under his operational control. The battle will most likely be brief and extremely violent. If we try to pass the baton in the middle of the fight, the results will be disastrous. Once again the question of who's in charge is raised. The answer is certain to determine the priority for security or support.

Similarly the problem of integrating fire support into the base cluster defensive scheme is complex. In maneuver theory, fire support is used for suppression of the enemy in order to augment maneuver. The fire support element (FSE) in the RAOC coordinates rear battle plans with units and staffs

to include planned maneuver fire support.⁹ In reality the use of fire support in the rear battle for either suppression or destruction will be very difficult. Base clusters will probably not have maneuver forces. The return of support vehicles to a base within a base cluster that is under attack where fire support is being employed could be disasterous for the returning vehicles. CSS units must be able to observe and adjust fires properly. There should be no rules that inhibit the artillery support. Accidents will kill fewer friendly soldiers than intentional enemy action. Artillery should respond down to base level because the enemy will not have artillery support and will probably not expect artillery support to be called in by logistics units. Because it is more likely that artillery will not be allocated in a DS role to the RAOC, response times may be lengthened for requested artillery support. The advantages of preplanned fires may be diminished if this is the case. CSS units lack an appreciation of the effectiveness of supporting fires and conceivably may not even plan for their availability. These more likely problems can be avoided if the fire support section in the RAOC accomplishes its doctrinal role. Fire support planning capabilities in the RAOC need to be on hand at D-Day if the fire support mission in the rear battle is to be effectively accomplished.

Additionally, the FSE of the RAOC is not currently organized to properly carry out its mission. The FSE should

be both a resource and intelligence tracker. This section should know what FA assets are in range of all the bases and base clusters. Additionally, by following intelligence traffic, the FSE should be able to anticipate requirements making the response more timely and effective. At least two light observation helicopters with pilots and spotters should be added to the RAOC FSE in order to correctly accomplish its mission.

Another area in which rear battle doctrine shortchanges CSS units is in the inherent self-defense mission that is implied in the base defense mission. CSS units are inadequately trained to meet the challenges of the violent, hostile and lethal rear battle. Present equipment and weapons authorizations discount threat assessments. Training against armor heavy ground attacks or low altitude air attacks is just not done. Although light antitank weapons (LAW) are authorized in some CSS units, the number of CSS soldiers that have actually fired this weapon is minuscule. Yet the LAW is probably the heaviest weapon authorized most CSS units. There is no medium AT weapon. Most units lack organic air defense weapons. CSS trucks lack mounts for .50 caliber machine guns effective for AD against helicopters or low flying aircraft. The machine guns that are on hand are by far too light to be effective against combat vehicles. Only a few grenade launchers, the weapon designed to engage light combat vehicles, are authorized and only a few soldiers

have ever thrown a hand grenade since they left basic training. Even more basic are the necessary rudiments for detecting enemy activity and protecting against it. Most CSS units are not even authorized binoculars let alone night vision devices or sensors. NBC detection equipment is an Army-wide problem but is particularly acute in CSS units. Active measures like patrolling, ambushing and night observation techniques are an unknown art in CSS units. Light and noise discipline training have never been seriously addressed. Field routines are generally not interrupted giving a serious enemy observer a decided advantage.

A few of these problems are being addressed institutionally. There is a weapons package proposal that is being worked in the Logistics Center for CSS units that will significantly increase a CSS unit's ability to defend itself. Unit and individual training initiatives have been introduced to overcome some of the more critical training problems cited above. The pivotal question is whether or not CSS units can fight and provide mission support at the same time. Current rear battle doctrine does not address this important issue. There is some doubt that CSS units can meet these challenges. Preparing to win in combat, the combat of the rear battle, regardless of the echelon must be the primary focus of CSS unit training. Combat skills must be integrated into mission support operations. CSS commanders must instill a genuine realization that the lives of combat soldiers are endangered

when CSS soldiers cannot accomplish their forward support mission as well as fight the rear battle. In the meantime, those charged with the revision and updating of the rear battle doctrine must include experienced logisticians who understand the complexities of direct support operations under combat conditions. They will need to devise workable solutions to the problems in the rear battle doctrine that are consistent with the capabilities of the units inhabiting the rear area.

Above all, military professionals charged with the conduct of the Airland Battle need to recognize the dangers that maneuver warfare doctrine poses to their rear areas. They must see the close-in, deep and rear battle as all one battle where, how and why units fight matter more than where and when they fight. These leaders must be educated by CSS commanders about the current weaknesses in the rear area and convinced not to aggravate these problems or expose this achilles heel by the foolhardy acceptance and malpractice of maneuver warfare doctrine.

ENDNOTES

¹William R. Richardson, "FM 100-5: The Airland Battle in 1986," Military Review, March 1986, p. 10.

²The seven doctrinal publications for rear battle are:

FM 54-9.
FM 63-3.
FM 90-14.
FM 100-5.
FM 100-15.
TRADOC PAM 525-5.
TRADOC PAM 525-30.

³Lind, Maneuver Warfare Handbook, Westview Press, 1985, p. 22.

⁴FM 90-14, Rear Battle, pp. 3-1 and 3-3.

⁵Ibid., p. 1.

⁶Ibid., pp. 3-17 and 3-19.

⁷C. N. Donnelly, "Operations in the Enemy Rear: Soviet Doctrine and Tactics," International Defense Review, January 1980, p. 160.

⁸FM 90-14, p. 3-21.

⁹Ibid., p. 3-15.